# The Autobiography of An Iron Man

By N. P. D.

CELLINI, how many autobiographies have been ill written in thy name-Cellini who rashly advised that any man who had done anything whatsoever in his life should write his autobiography when he reached 40! Chase S. Osborn, former Governor of Michigan and successful iron ore expert, whose hunt for the red dust has taken him all over the world, is the latest one to make Cellini the excuse for telling the story of his life.

But if all autobiographies were as interesting as The Iron Hunter they would rival novels as best sellers. Cellini's autobiography is interesting because it is the story of a swashbuckler and a braggart and a fighter and a miraculous goldsmith, a man of deeds and not a writer merely. Mr. Osborn's autobiography is interesting for similar reasons. If any man has done more things than he has done we do not know who it is unless it should be the cannibalistic cook in the Gilbertian

We cannot attempt to enumerate all the occupations Mr. Osborn has followed. When a young boy, after the family had lost its money, he became a ragpicker and also collected old iron. He did all kinds of farm work, split rails and chopped wood. He ran away from home, was cookee and chore boy in a winter lumber camp, and in the spring worked in a saw and shingle mill. He returned home with some money, and at 14 entered Perdue University, where Harvey Wiley was professor of chemistry. He walked to Chicago, 130 miles from his home in La Fayette, Ind., and in Chicago was potato peeler in a fifteen cent restaurant, rising to be second cook and ultimately to be waiter.

While waiter he met a newspaper reporter and got a job on the Chicago Tribune as errand boy to the city editor. He walked eighty miles to Milwaukee. where he drove a coal wagon. At Fond du Lac he was valet to a man eating stallion. He worked in a railroad construction gang. He piled lumber by day and engaged in dock walloping by night. He solicited subscriptions for an unsuccessful Milwaukee paper, with so much success that he was put in charge of the circulation department, and later was transferred to the editorial end.

Mr. Osborn married as soon as he became of age, gave his bride a 5 cent bouquet from the German market in Milwaukee, paid the preacher \$2 down and \$3 on the instalment plan, and took a joyous honeymoon on a street car drawn by horses. He soon went with his wife to Florence, Mich., in the heart of the Menominee iron range. He ran a weekly paper in Florence, which he was able to pay for at the end of his first year. Three years more, and he was \$10,000 to the good, sold out the paper in Florence and returned to Milwaukee to be city editor of the Sentinel.

Soon after this Mr. Osborn became the

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"Iron Hunter," and started prospecting, having become the friend of Hiram Damon Fisher, the discoverer of the Menominee range. He made his permanent home in Sault Sainte Marie. In 1911 he became Governor of Michigan. But before this we have casual mention of his having been State Fish and Game Warden, Commissioner of Railroads and a number of things besides. After he became interested in iron he resolved to visit every spot on the earth's surface where there might be any. It took him thirty years of almost continuous travel. After his term as Governor, we read that there were portions of Africa and the whole of Madagascar that he and his wife had not yet explored. They started off.

Mr. Osborn uses his mother's picture for the frontispiece of his book, a happy idea that may be recommended to other autobiographers. After seeing the mother it is easier to understand The Iron Hunter. Both his father and mother were doctors, which, by the way, probably accounts for their son's early reading. Gray's Anatomy, Dalton's physiology, Thomas on Diseases of Women and Children, pages of Dunglison's medical dietionary, Gully's and also Shew's hydropathy were no doubt Hobson's choice for a boy in a pioneer doctor's household.

The Osborns trekked from Ohio to Huntington county, Indiana, where Chase Osborn was born in 1860, in a two roomed log cabin, with one real glass window and two other windows of greased paper. There were ten children in all, three girls and seven boys. Feeling ran high in a border State at the time of the civil war and Mr. Osborn describes numerous riots in the schoolhouse and even in church. He says: "More than once a riot broke out on Sunday at the services in the log meeting house. Men would generally go for the open, but the women would pull each other over the benebes and scratch and pummel and drag each other around by the hair."

When the children began to grow up the family trekked again to La Fayette to be near schools. On the journey the mules ran away into the Wabash River when they saw an old wood burner locomotive on what is now the Wabash Railroad. In La Fayette the Osborn family was prosperous and lived in a big house. The father invented one of the first stoves with an oven. He also invented a washing machine, which may account for the sudden collapse in the family's fortunes.

Mr. Osborn starts his story in Florence, owing no doubt to a newspaper man's passion for a snappy opening paragraph. His book begins with Wolves! Florence was a lively mining town in the '80s, where a newspaper editor's life especially was in constant peril if he had a proclivity for reform and cleaning up things. Among the other attractions of Florence Mr. Osborn describes the women's stockades and an evil white slaver called "Old Man Mudge," who wore ministerial garb and worked as a preacher when out on his raids for girls. It was in Florence that Mr. Osborn had his introduction to polities. He seems to think politics have really been purified since Florence days. A \$50 bribe was offered to him by one of "Uncle Sawlog" Stephenson's men. He describes Uncle Ike and his brother Sam, who worked the political game on both sides of the Menominee River:

"They were wholesome men of their type and period. Only one way was there to get anything and that was to buy it. Hence their life could be summed up: Get money and buy what you want. They were honest according to prevailing standards, generous when they could see what they were getting for their giving, profane in language, chin likely to be a nicotine delta, canny in trade, forceful in business, crude and rude and uncouth in matters, manners and education, endued with homely horse sense and enough courage. They were both rich and getting richer sawing pine lumber and selling it."

Somewhere in his book Mr. Osborn quotes a man as wondering why rich men will not remember that there are no pockets in shrouds. Mr. Osborn gives a sample of how elections were conducted in Florence: "About ten minutes before the polls closed a thrifty citizen drove up with a team bearing twelve drunken Indians, an even dozen. Mike O'Day began to negotiate for them at once for the Democrats. A Republican pushed him aside and they roughed it a little, when, realizing how short the time was to buy those votes and get them in, they got to work again. It became a matter of open bidding, as in a slave mart or auction of any kind. Dollar by dollar they raised each other. O'Day bid \$12 a head. Both leaders knew the election was close. The Republican raised his bid to \$14. It was more than O'Day had. The Democrats were all in. The Republican got the votes, twelve, at \$14 each, open auction."

In enumerating a few of Mr. Osborn's multifarious careers, did we mention being regent of the State University of Michigan? He seems prouder of being regent than of anything else that ever happened to him. He says "any dub" can be Governor or Senator, but that the regents of Ann Arbor have always been selected men. He is amusingly frank in his comments on the candidates to succeed President Angell. The place was offered to Charles E. Hughes, who regretfully declined because he had before him "a life's work of reform in the political arena of New York." Mr. Osborn says:

"Within a few weeks he permitted himself to be sidetracked, even shelved, so far as political reform activities were concerned, by an appointment to the United States Supreme Court. In the light of what he had uttered in such a Parsifalian spirit, I was shocked, and in my eyes Mr. Hughes has worn a broken halo ever since."

Mr. Osborn is even more outspoken in his opinion of another candidate, of whom he says:

"One of the most interesting candidates, for we were caused to think, at least I was, that he solicited the position, was Woodrow Wilson. At the very first most of the regents jumped at the shining lure of surface brilliance. I do not mean to state that Mr. Wilson is not a profound scholar; only that, more than most men of erudition, he possesses an exterior luminescence that is distinctive. More sober consideration threw another light upon the retiring president of Princeton. There was a consensus of opinion that he had done good work at Princeton, but that whether he had done more good than harm was a question that could not be so easily answered. He ad gone to Pr mous support of the managers of that college, and left it with scarcely a friend among them. Practically, it seems, he was dismissed. His gratuitous quarrel with Grover Cleveland was analyzed, and a decision was come to that Dr. Wilson was tactless."

And now there is no room left for iron, which, after all, is the most important part of Mr. Osborn's book. Every young man who reads it will want to start out immediately to be an iron hunter himself. Mr. Osborn reminds his readers that "the iron ore of the world is worth more in dollars and cents than the combined value of all the diamonds, gold and silver." And he says there is plenty of it, enough for all; stating his expert opinion that "more iron ore exists and will be discovered in the future than has been found in the past."

The book is the interesting story of a successful career that could not have been made anywhere else in the world but in our own United States of America.

THE IRON HUNTER. BY CHASE S. Osnorn. The Macmillian Company. \$2.

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